

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 455

By Crowe

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate the pastor and congregation of Watauga Avenue Presbyterian Church of Johnson City on the celebration of their church's 125th anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this General Assembly recognize those venerable religious institutions and their congregations that, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such dynamic community of faith is Watauga Avenue Presbyterian Church of Johnson City, the pastor and members of which are celebrating the church's 125th anniversary as an important presence in the Tri-Cities and beyond on September 27, 2017; and

WHEREAS, on September 27, 1892, a small group of Christians in Johnson City organized a new church under the umbrella of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); on May 14, 1894, the church was renamed Watauga Avenue Presbyterian Church (WAPC); and

WHEREAS, church services were held in local school buildings, until a small brick chapel was built and dedicated at the corner of Watauga Avenue and New Street; the first addition to the building was a bell tower, and each Sunday the bell rang before services; and

WHEREAS, by 1966, Bethesda Presbyterian Church, an African-American congregation, had experienced a decline in membership and was unable to support a full-time pastor; Reverend Donald Frederick, pastor of WAPC who also served as Moderator of Session for Bethesda, and the leadership of both churches agreed a merger of the two congregations was in order; and

WHEREAS, thus, during a time when civil unrest and racial tension were rampant throughout the United States, the Bethesda and Watauga congregations prayerfully and

gracefully became united as one; today, several artifacts from the old Bethesda Church, including a Kimball pump organ, are still located in WAPC's Heritage Room; and

WHEREAS, on April 27, 1969, the final Sunday worship service was celebrated in the old sanctuary, and demolition of the structurally unsound building began the next morning; a dedication service for the new sanctuary was held on September 27, 1970; and

WHEREAS, Margaret Dugger was the first woman ordained as an Elder of Session in 1971 and was elected Clerk of Session; by 1977, there were twenty-one members of Session, including nine women; and

WHEREAS, over the years, WAPC has excelled in both local and foreign mission work through donations and financial aid to a host of groups, organizations, and ministries, including the American Leprosy Mission, Cup of Cold Water, Coalition for Kids, Meals on Wheels, Safe Passage, Good Samaritan Ministries, Grandfather Home for Children, Habitat for Humanity, Haven of Mercy, Heifer Project International, Holston Presbytery Camp, Interfaith Hospitality Network/Family Promise, Johnson City Downtown Clinic, Loaves & Fishes, Pioneer Bible Translators, Salvation Army, Safe Haven, Second Harvest Food Bank, Vellore (India) Christian Medical Fund, and Wycliff Bible Translators; and

WHEREAS, God has blessed Watauga Avenue Presbyterian Church of Johnson City miraculously during its illustrious 125-year history, and its congregation gives thanks to the Lord for His past and continual blessings; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we join in the celebration of the 125th anniversary of Watauga Avenue Presbyterian Church of Johnson City, thank the good people of this outstanding congregation for their notable service to their Lord and the State of Tennessee, and wish them much continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.